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26 May 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: A Possible Soviet Action in Korea

1. [redacted] among the various conceivable Soviet courses of action in the Far East, that of a "peaceful" re-occupation of North Korea (or of a considerable part of it) ought not to be overlooked. The Soviets might suddenly announce to the world that, US forces having returned to South Korea, their own troops were again being sent into the northern part of the country to preserve order and protect the inhabitants, etc., and to shield the borders of the USSR itself from danger. Such a move might well be advertised by the Soviets as having no belligerent intent or implication; if conflict with the US were to follow it would be owing to US initiative.

2. We have made no thorough study of the likelihood of such a move, or of its implications and probable consequences, but we believe that it should be given serious consideration. For more than half a century the Russians have demonstrated their deep interest and concern in Korea; during the 1890's they discussed the possibility of partitioning the country between themselves and the Japanese. The Soviets would be most reluctant to accept the loss of North Korea and the establishment of UN forces along the Yalu River. To avoid such developments they might well move into North Korea not with the intention of provoking a clash with US forces, but with the hope of avoiding such a clash and of returning to the state of affairs which existed before the US and the USSR forces respectively had terminated their previous occupation.

[redacted]

WILLIAM L. LANGER
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